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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

I

THE ORIGIN OF THE PRONOUN "SHE"

Few problems in Middle English grammar have been so baffling as that of the source of the pronominal forms *scho*, *sche*, and *she* which gradually replace the older fem. pers. pron. *heo*, *he* and *ho* in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. While a dozen years ago OE. *sēo* was regarded by several scholars as either the direct source, or as having been the chief factor in the change, so in one form or another Earle, Morsbach, and Sweet, recently again the question has seemed to many wholly problematical. Thus Henry Bradley in *The Making of English*, p. 55, records the form "she" as "unexplained," and similarly H. Logeman in his article: "On Some Cases of Scandinavian Influence in English" in Vol. CXVII, p. 44 of *Archiv f. d. St. d. n. Sp.* On the other hand Kaluza still accepts the view that "she" is formally a composite of *heo* and *seo* (*Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*. II, second ed. 1907). A reconsideration of the question seems therefore desirable. From certain points of view, which have not been sufficiently taken account of hitherto, I believe new light can be thrown upon the question. And first I shall note briefly the explanations offered before.

In his *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, Friedrich Koch listed the southern variants *heo*, *ho*, *seo*, and *soe*, and the form *gho* as characteristic of the *Ormulum*. He thereupon notes the appearance of *scho* and *sche* without, however, attempting to explain their origin. John Earle¹ regarded O. E. *sēo* as the source, and this was to be found for the first time in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 1140 (*and scæ fleh*), in which derivation he has been followed by others since. Earle held that

¹In his *Philology of the English Tongue*.

the rise of the form *she* < *sēo* dem. pron. was a development parallel to that of "they," pers. pron.¹ from, as he thought, O. E. *þā*, dem. pr. This view was formulated by Morsbach, *Über den Ursprung der Neuenglischen Schriftsprache*,² p. 121, as follows: "Im Satze unbetontes *sēo* ergab *seo*, *sjo*, *sho*, betontes *sēo* wurde zunächst zu *sē*, welches durch Anlehnung an das unbetonte *sho*, mit dem es wechselte, gleichfalls zu *she* wurde."³ The difficulty with this explanation is that it assumes, 1), the development in East Midland of the demonstrative *sēo* to the personal pronoun "she" at a time when the old demonstratives had become weakened to mere articles; 2), it assumes the change in M. E. of earlier *se* + *o* to *sh* + *o*, a change that is unparalleled in native English words. There are also other difficulties which will be noted below.³ Similar is Henry Sweet's explanation; he assumes a hybrid *schēo* (< *scho* and *sēo*) as the immediate source of "she," *ēo* having regularly become *ē*. According to Sweet also O. E. *hēo* passed thro *hēo* into *hjoo*, *jhoo*, written *gho* in Early Midland, which form was lost however, *scho* taking its place (*Short Historical English Grammar*). This is accepted by Skeat in *Principles of English Etymology*, I, but in his *Concise Etymological Dictionary* (1898), he seems to think that O. N. *sjá*. dem. pr. may have had something to do with it, inclining thus to Kluge's view given in Paul's *Grundriss*, I, p. 90. This etymology Kluge later abandoned, it would seem, for in *English Etymology* O. E. *hēo*, per, pron., is given as the functional source of "she," which phonetically is traced back to O. E. *sēo*, dem. pron. (as Morsbach). Finally, the views of Morsbach and Sweet are accepted by O. F. Emerson, who in his *History of the English Language* (1895) p. 326, speaks of *s* as having in this word become palatalized to *sh*. In *Englische Studien*, XXII, p. 330, Sarrazin, however, takes exception to the prevailing theory. He believes O. E. *hēo* to be the direct source, through *hjo*, *gho* (Orm's form) this later becoming *scho*, a development which he holds equally easy and natural with that of *kj* > *tsh*. He cites the ap-

1. Now generally held to be from O. N. *þeir*.

2. Heilbronn, 1888. Sentence so in original.

3. Morsbach's later effort, *Anglia*, VII. 331, to identify 'she' with the Frisian personal pronominal stem with initial *s*, acc, f, *se*, pl, *se* is not convincing.

parently pertinent case of the name Shetland from O. N. *Hjaltland*, but in connection with this makes the seemingly contradictory statement that "höchstens in wörtern altnordischen ursprungs konnte ein ähnlicher lautwandel eintreten." Is then "she" after all not from O. E. *hēo*? Sarrazin is also assuming rather much when he says that *hj*, *jh*, developed as easily to *sch* (*š*) as *kj* to *tsh* (*tš*), for the latter is common to both English and the Scandinavian languages (and also cp. O. Norman *c* (*k*) to *ch*, as in "chamber," English-loanword) while on the other hand the change from *hj* to *sh* is not at all proven for English. To be sure the latter has taken place in some parts of Scandinavian territory, something that Sarrazin also notes, but he does not assume any Scandinavian influence upon the supposed change in the pronunciation of the English pronoun. Sarrazin's explanation seems to have been accepted by Eilert Ekwall, *Shakespeare's Vocabulary*, 1903, p. 57, who classes "she" with native English words. He refers in a note to the theories of Kluge, Skeat and Sarrazin, and says relative to the last: "the divergent view of Sarrazin 'she' < O. E. *hēo* is, in my opinion, more probable." Kaluza's opinion seems to be that formally and functionally both, O. E. *hēo* is the source of our pronoun. His words are: "Anlautendes ae. *h+j* ergab me. *jh* (*j*), *sch* (*š*) in dem. Pron. *zhe*, *zho*, *sche*, *scho*, *sie* (ae. *hē*, *heō*, *hjo*)."¹ (§ 271 note 1), and in 319. "Der N. Sg. F. der 3 Pers. ae. *hēo*, *heō* wurde zu me. *zho*, *scho*, daneben auch *zhe*, *sche*; letztere Form wurde schliesslich alleinherrschend." Reference has already been made to Bradley's discussion above; his full statement may here be added: "The fact that 'they, them, their,' represent Scandinavian demonstrative pronouns favors the hypothesis that 'she' is connected in some obscure way with the O. N. feminine demonstrative *sū* and *sjā*, which often had the function of personal pronouns."

The possible identity of the enclitic—*is*,—*es*, of So. Kent. and So. E. Midl. as *setles*—"she put" Kentish *he's*, *hese*, with Frisian *se*, as *hi nourse*, "he took her," is examined by W.

1. By Kluge and Lutz, 1898.

Heuser, *Anglia*, XI, p. 306, but he leaves in abeyance the question of what share this—*es*, *his*, *hese*, may have had in the development of *scho*, *sche*. The objections to the enclitic *se* as a source of the pro. “she” will be clear, I think, in the course of our consideration of the general pronominal conditions below.

Judging from all the facts that we can know it seems clear to me that “she” cannot have developed out of O. E. *sēo*, directly or indirectly, by a transference of its initial dental spirant to the pers. pron. *ʒhe*, *ʒho*. It is also clear that the forms with *sch* (*sh*) originated in the northeast Midland and adjacent parts of Northern English territory, that is specifically in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. It will be in order to observe here the form and the distribution of the feminine personal and demonstrative pronominal forms in Early Middle English.

In general the demonstratives *se* and *seo* have been replaced by *þe* and *þeo* (*þe*) before, and in most places long before, the forms *scho* and *sche* appear. That is, the chronology of the forms which come to supplant each other is: 1, a), *he*, *heo* with b), *se*, *seo*, in which period also appear the feminines *he* and *se*; 2, a), *he*, *heo*, *he*, *hye*, *hi*, *ʒho*, *ʒeo*, *ʒo*, etc. with b); *þeo*; *þeo* (*þe*); 3, a), *sge*, *scho*, *sche*, *she* with b) *þe*. Whereas the theory most often held requires that *seo* or at least *se* appear along with the forms of 1, a, and 3 a also, unless one wishes to assume that *seo* became *scho*, which is disproved by other considerations to be noted below.

A glance at the texts of the period will show above sequence of form groups. In Southern texts *þe*, with the feminines *þeo* or *þa* (also *þe*) are fully developed in the last half of the twelfth century while the old fem. pers. pron. *hēo* still remains, as in *Lazamon* (last part of the twelfth century), *þe*, sing. *þa* plur. beside *hēo Juliana* (1200, northern part of southern territory), *þe*, *þeo* along with *heo*, *ha*, while in the late Mirk's *Instructions to Parish Priests* (1400) we find the characteristic southern *hia* (modern dialectal *ha*, *a*); i. e. *sche* does not here appear, and the article *þe* is of course regularly employed. In *Old English Homilies*, second series (E.E.T.S.), the date of which is some-

what prior to and following 1200, and which represent southeast Midland, the fem. pers. pron. is *heo*, *hie*, and *he* while again the article (dem. pron.) is *þe*, *þio*, sing. *þo*, plur. In the *Floris and Blancheflor*, (S. E. Midl. about 1230-1240), *þe* appears regularly as article, sing. and plur. In the *Bestiary* (S.E. Midl. probably about 1240), the article is regularly *þe*, sing. and plur. while here the fem. pers. pron. is *ge*, (probably representing *ȝe*).

The *Genesis and Exodus*, which has been variously dated, but which I cannot help thinking at least as late as 1250, and as East Midland in origin but somewhat mixed in its dialect, has *ghe* almost exclusively as the fem. dem. pron., i. e. the palatal and the vowel of the form which we have already noted for the *Bestiary*. The spelling with *h*, however, which is almost universal in the *Genesis and Exodus*, shows an aspirated *j* which is not present in the pronunciation of the author of the *Bestiary*. That is, in the latter we have the southern (S.E.M., S.E. So.) palatalization, in the former the northern (N.E.M., Southern part of No.) composite aspirated palatal, *ȝh*). Spirantization of the *h* is not uncommon in Kentish and the Southeast generally as in the forms *hya*, *hiya* and *hye*, but the two first letters cannot in these cases have represented the same quality of aspiration as in the North Midlands.¹ For in the South (and Southeast) the characteristic forms are, or soon come to be, either *ȝe*, *ȝi*, *ȝie*, *ȝeo*, or *ȝo*, that is, minus the aspiration, or else *he*, *hi*, *ha*, *ho*, *hu*, *hue*, *hoe*, that is, minus the palatal [j]. These forms remain in the southern dialects today, as in Wiltshire, *ȝi* and *ȝi*, and elsewhere, *hu*, *u*, *ha*, *a*. In the forms with *h* the *e* (*i*) was early dropped as in the *Ancren Riwe* (*ha*) or the *Owl and the Nightingale*, *Hali Meidenhad*, and elsewhere (*ho*).

Now in the *Genesis and Exodus* the fem. pers. pron. appears also exceptionally as *ge*, *che*, *sge*, *sche*, and *she*. But these forms are very rare. An examination of 3700 lines gives the relative frequency as follows: *ghe* 82, *ge* 1, *che* 1, *sge* 3, *sche* 4, and *she* 1. The form *che*, if of sufficiently frequent occurrence, might

1. Orm's *ȝh*.

indicate that the author was familiar with a pronunciation of the fem. pers. pron. which lay approximately half-way between the mediopalatal *ʒhe* and that which is evidently represented in *sge* and *sche*. However it is found so rarely that no inference can be drawn from it, it may be, indeed probably is, simply an inexact writing for *ghe*. The author's own pronunciation is clearly *ʒhe* which appears as *ghe* 82 times out of 91.¹ It is hardly possible to disregard the three writings *sge*, *sche* and *she* as inexact spellings of *ghe*. If these come from the author himself then they would seem to indicate that the author of G.E. was also familiar with another more northerly pronunciation of the fem. pers. pro. which he has occasionally introduced into his work. Or, inasmuch as the language of G.E. is not pure, it may be that these forms have come into our text later than the time of the writing of the original (and from another dialect). In the *Floris and Blanche-flor*, which is S.E.M. of the same time or perhaps slightly earlier, the fem. pron. is still consistently *heo*, while, as we have seen above, the old dem. pr. and article has become *pe*, sing. and plur. The forms *scho* and *sche* then, as composites of *heo*+*seo*, *se*, cannot possibly have developed in East Midland territory for clearly *seo* has disappeared long before such forms as *hjo* or *ghe* develop. There is then left the North.

In the *Ormulum*, which was written in Lincolnshire about 1200, and is therefore Northeast Midland English, O. E. *hēo* fem. pers. pron., appears as *ʒho* (O. E. *hēo*, pl. has been replaced by *þeʒz*, *heom* appears as *hemm*, though usually supplanted by *þeʒzm*). Lambertz, *Die Sprache des Ormulums* 327, holds that *ʒh* represents "mehr oder weniger gutturale oder mediopalatale stimmhafte Reibelaute je nach der Art der ungebunden Buchstaben." But this *ʒh* does not, he says, appear initially, for the etymology of *ʒho* forbids the assumption of a guttural spirant here (§ 332). Lambertz is dubious with regard to Sweet's view that *ʒh* in *ʒho*, "she," probably represented the sound of German *ch* in *ich*.

¹ omitting *ge* from the count; *ge* certainly=*ghe* here.

I believe that *ʒh* in *ʒho* here represents a palatal with heavy aspiration. Had the *h* simply been graphic (silent) Orm would have written *ʒo*; but he is here, as elsewhere, consistent and always writes *ʒho*. The pronunciation is either *hjo* (Sweet), or as I rather believe, *ʒh*, here, as elsewhere in Orm in the neighborhood of back vowels, represents a sound so near to the guttural spirant that Orm found in *ʒh* the symbol that would most nearly represent it. It is significant that the form here is the one with the vowel *o*, as in such later northern texts as the *Cursor Mundi* and the works of *Rolle of Hampole*, all written in Yorkshire, the *Cursor* probably somewhat before 1300.

It is clear that Orm's *ʒho* is the precursor of the Yorkshire form *scho*, which by influence of the *he*- and *ʒhe*-forms in Lincolnshire becomes *sche*, as in *Havelock* and in *Robert Manning*. But it is perfectly clear also that *scho* can not represent a composite of *hjo* and *sco*, for here as farther south *seo* has disappeared long ago. In the *Peterborough Chronicle* (N. E. Midland, directly south of Lincolnshire) the old dem. art. *seo* is still met with in Part I (written 1121), and in Part II (written 1131) as *se* (before masculines and feminines alike), while in Part III (1132-1154, written 1154) *se* (and *seo*) has been supplanted by *pe* throughout in article function. Also in the *Ormulum* the article *pe* has absolutely replaced *se* and *seo*. Hence, if there has been some outside influence operating to change *ʒho* to *scho* it must have been an influence other than the O. E. *sēo*. This becomes still clearer if we bear in mind that the obscuration of gender came about first in the north (Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and adjacent region) and that it would have been very unlikely that the form *seo* should long have maintained itself as an article (or dem. pron.) here any more than in Midland territory. And, in fact, as has been pointed out above, *se* (and *seo*) are wholly supplanted by *pe* in Part III of the *Chronicle*. This new form also appears with demonstrative force as in *Pet. Chr.* 1087, something which would seem to make the continuation of the form improbable in view of the fact that the earlier inflected forms of the dem. pr. and article had an initial *p* as the neuter *pæt.*, acc. fem. *pa*, and Pl. *pa*, etc.

Yet I can see how for a time *se* might have survived as a demonstrative after the regular article had become *þe*. There is indeed a possibility, that the form *scæ* (Chron. 1140) is such a survival; yet,¹ it may be objected, why should *se* survive particularly as a fem. dem. and not rather as a masculine, for while gender had become obscured such fem. forms as *þeo* (and *heo*) and acc. *þa* would certainly have operated toward preventing the fixing of the feminine gender upon *se* as opposed to the masculine. I shall return to *scæ* below.

As far as the West Midlands are concerned we find the same condition there, except that *heo* in its various forms is evidenced at a much later date. These forms are *heo*, *he*, *hue*, *hoe*, *ha*, *ho* and *þoe*. The form that seems more characteristic of the Northern part of West Midland speech being *ho* as in the *Early English Alliterative Poems* (Lancashire).² Some of these forms remain down to this day in the dialects of these regions as we have seen they do in the South, especially in the forms *ho*, *hu* and *u*. It is not until quite late that *sche* establishes itself in the West, and then evidently as an importation from the East Midlands and the North; and long after this has taken place, the old pers. pron. continues side by side with it in literature (as *William of Palerne*, *Langland*, et al).

Nor did *heo* vanish in the North for in the present dialects of Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, etc., it remains as *hu* and *u* (Halliwell's *Glossary*, Wright's *Dialect Grammar*, 1906.) In connection with this the condition in Kentish is instructive. Here the forms *si* and *hi* are the rule, but with these are also frequently found *sy* and *hy*, *sy*, *sie*, and *hie*, *hye*, *hiyo*, *hya*, and even *zie* (Dehn, *Die Pronomina des Frühmittelenglischen*, pp. 32-33). But there is no evidence whatever of any influence of one group upon the other; no such composites as *schye*, *schie* or *scho* (*hi*, *hye*, *hyo*+*si*, *sy*, *sy*, etc.) occur. Nor is there any evidence that would point to the fact that *seo* became *sche* thus replacing *heo* (as Morsbach, Kluge, Dehn, R. Morris), for the very reason that, while it is clear that *scho* and

1. In fact *scæ* is a dem. pron. in three of the four cases in which it occurs in the annual for 1140.

2. *scho* occurs once in *E.E.A.P.*

sche originate in the North East Midlands and adjacent territory to the North, here *seo* (and *se*) has given way to *þeo* and *þe* along with which for a considerable period *þho*, *þhe*, is the fem. pers. pron.

And there is further the phonological difficulty of deriving *sche* from *seo*.¹ Here perhaps it is necessary, however, to take into account again the form *scæ* which occurs four times in the Peterborough Chronicle for 1140. Those who derive *sche* from *seo* regard this as the earliest occurrence of *sche*. The form *scæ* is indeed perplexing, first, because, if it be the modern *she*, this isolated occurrence seems to be a century too early, second, because it occurs only in this one annual, written twenty years after *se* has been replaced by *þe*², and third, because the spelling is unusual both as regards consonants and vowel. The Peterborough Chronicle represents linguistically a region only slightly south of that of the Ormulum. Yet in this text the fem. pers. pron. is *þho*. This together with facts considered above would seem to point to the necessity of separating *scæ* (Chron.) from e. g. *scho* of the Cursor Mundi (before 1300) and Yorkshire and Lincolnshire *scho* and *sche* of the second half of the 13th Century. Further as *sc* and *æ* may both have various values in the Peterborough Chronicle *scæ* becomes doubly perplexing. The vowel *æ* may here stand for *e*, *æ*, *ea*, *ēa*, or *ēo*, (see Meyer, *Die Sprache des Chronik von Peterborough*), and as *sc* may also simply be an inexact writing for *s* (as *Scessuns* for *Soissons*) *scæ* may mean *se* (O. E. *se*, *sēo*), *sa*, or *so*. If the latter it may be the Old Dano-Norse *su*, which as Bradley points out (in note referred to p. 117 above), often had the function of pers. pron. Or *scæ* might represent the pronunciation *shæ* or *sha*, in which case it might be derived from O. Norse *sjá* (as Kluge once, later Skeat, and as Bradley suggests). *Sjá* would become *sha* or *shæ* (unstressed). The early date 1154 favors this as in this bilingual region the O. N. *sjá* (pronounced by the Norse speaking English *sha*), was of course known to the English. The rarity of Norse-Danish words in the Chronicle does not militate against

1. Even if we may disregard that it is chiefly *se* f. and m. that we would have to deal with as the intermediate form.

2. and *seo* has earlier yielded to *se*.

such a theory for O. N. *þeir* is consistently used in Orm and was probably already established by 1154. And it is furthermore not the scarcity of loans that is the significant thing but the number of times later loans are yet regularly represented by native words. However, for reasons given above and others to be added below I do not believe Modn. E. "she" is represented in *scæ*; its origin must be sought elsewhere.

If I am right so far the following conclusions will follow: The fem. pers. pron. *scho*, *sche*, in M. E. cannot come from O. E. *hēo* f. pron. by influence of the demonstrative *sēo*, nor can it come from *sēo* direct. Further, there is not much evidence that O. N. *sjá* (or *sū*) is the source or has played any role in the development of "she." Also *scho* and *sche* clearly originate in precisely those sections of England which formed the heart of the Danish and Norse settlement and where, therefore, they formed a very large proportion of the population, namely Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and adjacent country. O. E. *hēo* remains as the only possible source of *sche*, but everything points to the fact that it was by some form of Scandinavian influence. I believe that influence lies in the way *heo* was pronounced by Norsemen and the English in a region which for a long time was bilingual. Orm's form *þho* was an effort to represent that pronunciation, which must have been heavily aspirated, a voiceless semi-guttural spirant very much like what we may assume was the value of the consonant combination *hj* in native Norse words. Orm, who himself was in all probability of Norse or Danish descent, consistently wrote this sound *þh*. The form *þho* must also be assumed for Yorkshire, in fact it is not unlikely that the half dentalized spirant, which must have been intermediate between *þho* and *scho*, developed first in Yorkshire and perhaps as early as the second quarter of the century.

We assume in short that we have here the same stage of development from *hj* (*hjo*) to *scho* as took place in O. N. *hj* to *sh* (š) in many Norwegian words, particularly in those parts of Norway whence a large number of the Norse Vikings who settled

in that part of England came.¹ So. O. N. *hja*, "with, *chez*, at the house of," Mod. Norw. *sjaa* (dialects of Telemarken, Hardanger, Søndhordland, Ryfylke, Jæderen, *shao* in Sogn, and *sjaa* in Gudbrandsdalen); O. N. *hjastaurr*, the stick used as a brace in a rail-fence, Mod. N. *sjaastaur* (in Stjördalen); O. N. *hjóm*, "a thin layer," Mod. No. *sjaam*, "a thin stratum of clouds" (Hadeland), also adj. *sjaamet*; O. N. *hjallr*, "scaffold," *sjell* in No. Gudbrandsdalen; O. N. *hjarni*, "brain," *sjerne* in No. Gudbrandsdalen, and in the same region and elsewhere O. N. *hjón*, *hjún*, "husband and wife" is *sjon*, also in *sjonskilna*, "separation of husband and wife." In Jakobson's *Det norröne Sprog på Shetland* may be found numerous cases of this same case as *shalma*, "a helmeted cow," black cow with a white head, < O. N. *hjálmr* (p. 103) etc.; but the phonology of Shetland words is very irregular and I prefer to leave these out of account. The name Shetland, however, illustrates well how the change from *ʒho* to *scho* may have come about in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Here the O. N. *Hjaltland* was at an early time written *Syettelant*, *Schetteland*. The combination *hj* in the name *Hjaltland* having a strongly aspirated semi-guttural sound was heard by the early settlers as a dentalized spirant (hsch) and later was so written. Thus in No. 114 of the records of *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*, Vol. II, written in Latin at Inverness, Scotland, October 29, 1312, the old name *Hjaltland* is written *Syettelant*, p. 98, and *Syettelantia*, p. 99. In a Latin letter of 1289, Thorwald, governor of *Hjaltland* 1290-1300, is spoken of as *Thorvaldus de Shetland*.

In a similar way I conceive did the spirant *hj*, *ʒh*, as pronounced in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, come to be heard as *scho* and so written. From this region then *scheo* arose which later became *sche*, *she*; this form thereupon spread south into East and Southeast Midland and into the literary language.

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¹ Danes were undoubtedly in the majority in Lincolnshire but this does not affect the problem.